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In EPISTLES to a Friend.

EPISTLE IV.

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*Of the Nature and State of Man, with respect
to Happiness.*

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Virtue what are only the calamities of *Nature*, or of *Fortune*, 91. The Folly of expecting that God should alter his General Laws in favour of particulars, 118. That we are not judges *who are good*? but that whoever they are, they must be *happiest*, 130, &c. That *External goods* are not the proper Rewards, often inconsistent with, or destructive of *Virtue*, 166. But that even these can make no man happy without *Virtue*. Instanc'd in Riches, 175. Honours, 183. Birth, 205. Greatness, 207. Fame, 227. Superior Talents, 250. with pictures of human Infelicity in men possess of them all, 269, &c. That *Virtue only* constitutes a Happiness, whose Object is *universal*, 300. and whose Prospect *eternal*, 340. The perfection of which consists in a *conformity* to the *Order of Providence*, here, and in a *resignation* to it, here and hereafter, 350. Or (in other words) in *Love of God*, and *Charity to all men*, &c. to the end.



A N

ESSAY on *MAN*.

EPISTLE IV.

O Happiness! our Being's End and Aim!
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! whate'er
thy Name!

That Something still, which prompts th' eternal Sigh,

For which we bear to live, nor fear to die;

Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies, 5

O'er-look'd, seen double, by the Fool—and Wise.

Plant of Cœlestial Seed! if dropt below,

Say, in what mortal Soil thou deign'st to grow?

Fair-

Fair-opening to some Court's propitious shine,
 Or deep with Diamonds in the flaming Mine, 10
 Twin'd with the Wreaths Parnassian Laurels yield,
 Or reap'd in Iron Harvests of the Field?
 Where grows— where grows it not?— If vain our Toil,
 We ought to blame the Culture, not the Soil:
 Fix'd to no Spot is Happiness sincere; 15
 'Tis no where to be found, or ev'ry where;
 'Tis never to be bought, but always free,
 And fled from Monarchs, *Lelius*! dwells with thee.

Ask of the Learn'd the Way, the Learn'd are blind,
 This bids to serve, and that to shun Mankind: 20
 Some place the Bliss in Action, some in Ease,
 Those call it Pleasure, and Contentment these:
 Who thus define it, say they more or less
 Than this, that Happiness is Happiness?
 One grants his Pleasure is but Rest from Pain, 25
 One doubts of All, one owns ev'n Virtue vain.

Take *Nature's* Path, and mad Opinion's Leave,
 All States can reach it, and all Heads conceive;

Obvious her Goods, in no Extreme they dwell,
 There needs but thinking right, and meaning well; 30
 And mourn our various Portions as we please,
 Equal is *common Sense*, and *common Ease*.

Remember Man! ' the universal Cause
 ' Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral Laws;
 And makes what Happiness we justly call, 35
 Subsist not in the Good of one, but all.
 There's not a Blessing Individuals find,
 But some way leans and hearkens to the Kind.
 No Bandit fierce, no Tyrant mad with Pride,
 No cavern'd Hermit, rest self-satisfy'd; 40
 Who most to shun or hate Mankind pretend,
 Seek an Admirer, or wou'd fix a Friend.
 Abstract what others feel, what others think,
 All Pleasures sicken, and all Glories sink;
 Each has his Share, and who wou'd more obtain 45
 Shall find the Pleasure pays not half the Pain.

Order is Heav'n's first Law; and this contest,
 Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,

More

More rich, more wise : But who infers from hence
 That such are *happier*, shocks all common Sense. 50
 Heav'n to Mankind impartial we confess,
 If all are equal in their Happiness:
 But mutual Wants this Happiness increase,
 All Nature's Difference keeps all Nature's Peace;
 Condition, Circumstance is not the thing, 55
Bliss is the same, in Subject or in King;
 In who obtain defence, or who defend,
 In him who is, or him who finds a friend.
 Heav'n breathes thro' ev'ry member of the whole
 One common Blessing, as one common Soul : 60
 But Fortune's gifts if each alike possess,
 And each were equal, must not all contest?
 If then to all men Happiness was meant,
 God in Externals could not place Content.

Fortune her gifts may variously dispose, 65
 And these be call'd unhappy, happy those;
 But Heav'n's just balance equal will appear,
 While those are plac'd in Hope, and these in Fear :
 Not present Good or Ill, the joy or curse,
 But future views, of Better, or of Worse. 70

Oh Sons of Earth! attempt ye still to rise

By mountains pil'd on mountains, to the Skies?

Heav'n still with laughter, the vain toil surveys,

And buries Madmen in the Heaps they raise.

Know, all the Good that Individuals find,

75

Or God and Nature meant to mere mankind,

Reason's whole pleasures, all the joys of Sense,

Lie in three words, *Health, Peace, and Competence.*

But Health consists with Temperance alone,

And Peace, fair Virtue! Peace is all thy own;

80

The gifts of Fortune good or bad may gain;

But these less taste them, as they worse obtain.

Say, in pursuit of Profit or Delight,

Who risk the most, that take wrong means, or right?

Of Vice or Virtue, whether blest or curst,

85

Which meets Contempt, or which Compassion first?

Count all th' advantage prosp'rous Vice attains,

'Tis but what Virtue flies from, and disdains;

And grant the bad what happiness they wou'd,

One they must want, which is to pass for good.

90

Oh blind to Truth, and God's whole Scheme below!

Who fancy Blis to Vice, to Virtue Woe:

PART IV.

B

Who

Who sees and follows that great Scheme the best,
Best knows his blessing, and will most be blest.

But Fools the *Good* alone unhappy call, 95
For Ills or Accidents that chance to *All*.

See FALKLAND falls, the virtuous and the just!

See godlike TURENNE prostrate on the dust!

See SIDNEY bleeds amid the martial strife!

Was this their *Virtue*, or Contempt of life? 100

Say was it Virtue, more tho' Heav'n ne'er gave,

Lamented DIGBY! sunk thee to the Grave?

Tell me, if Virtue made the Son expire,

Why, full of Days and Honour, lives the Sire?

Why drew *Marfeilles*, good Bishop, purer breath, 105

When Nature sicken'd, and each gale was Death?

Or why so long (in Life if long can be)

Lent Heav'n a *Parent* to the Poor and Me.

What makes all Physical or Moral Ill?

There deviates Nature, and here wanders Will. 110

God sends not Ill, 'tis Nature lets it fall

Or Chance escape, and Man improves it all;

We just as wisely might of Heav'n complain,

That righteous *Abel* was destroyed by *Cain*,

(II)

As that the virtuous Son is ill at Ease, 115
When his lewd Father gave the dire Disease.
Think we like some weak Prince th' Eternal Cause,
Prone for his Fav'rites to reverse his Laws?

Shall burning *Ætna*, if a Sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires? 120
On Air or Sea new Motions be imprest,
O blameless *Bethel*! to relieve thy Breast?
When the loose Mountain trembles from on high,
Shall Gravitation cease, if you go by?
Or some old Temple nodding to its fall, 125
For Chartres head reserve the hanging Wall.

But still this World (so fitted for the Knave)
Contents us not. A better shall we have?
A Kingdom of the Just then let it be:
But first consider how those Just agree? 130
The Good must merit God's peculiar care;
But who but God can tell us, who they are?
One thinks on *Calvin* Heav'n's own spirit fell,
Another deems him Instrument of Hell;
If *Calvin* feel Heav'n's Blessing, or its Rod, 135
This cries there is, and that, there is no God.

What shocks one Part will edify the rest,
 Nor with one System can they all be blest.
 Give each a System, all must be at strife ;
 What different Systems for a Man and Wife ? 140
 The very best will variously incline,
 And what rewards your Virtue, punish mine,
 “ Whatever is, is right.” — This world, ’tis true,
 Was made for *Cæsar* — but for *Titus* too :
 And which more blest ? who chain’d his Country, say,
 Or, he, whose Virtue sigh’d to lose a Day. 146

“ But sometimes Virtue starves while Vice is fed.”
 What then ? is the reward of Virtue, Bread ?
 That, Vice may merit ; ’tis the price of Toil :
 The Knave deserves it when he tills the Soil, 150
 The Knave deserves it when he tempts the Main,
 Where Madness fights, for Tyrants or for Gain.
 The good Man may be weak, be indolent,
 Nor is his claim to Plenty, but Content.
 But grant him Riches, your demand is o’er ? 155
 “ No shall the good want health, the good want Pow’r,
 Add health and pow’r, and ev’ry earth’y thing :
 “ Why bounded pow’r ? why private ? why no King ?
 Nay,

Nay, why external for internal giv'n,

Why is not Man a God, and Earth a Heav'n?

160

Who ask and reason thus, will scarce conceive

God gives enough while he has more to give:

Immense the Pow'r, immense were the demand;

Say, at what part of Nature will they stand.

What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,

165

The Soul's calm sun-shine, and the heart-felt joy,

Is Virtue's Prize: A better wou'd you fix,

And give Humility a Coach and six?

Justice a Conqu'ror's sword, or Truth a Gown,

Or publick Spirit, its great cure, a Crown?

170

Rewards that either wou'd to Virtue bring

No joy, or be destructive of the thing.

How oft by these at sixty are undone

The Virtues of a Saint at twenty-one!

For *Riches*, can they give but to the Just,

175

His own Contentment, or another's Trust?

Judges and Senates have been bought for Gold,

Esteem and Love were never to be sold.

O Fool! to think God hates the worthy Mind,

The Lover, and the Love, of Human kind,

180

Whose

Whose Life is healthful, and whose Conscience clear;
Because he wants a thousand pounds a year!

Honour and *Shame* from no Condition rise;
Act well your Part, there all the Honour lies.
Fortune in men has some small difference made, 185
One flaunts in Rags, one flutters in Brocade,
The Cobler apron'd, and the Parson gown'd,
The Fryar hooded, and the Monarch crown'd.
“ What differ more (you cry) than Crown and Cowl?
I'll tell you, friend: a Wise man and a Fool. 190
You'll find, if once the Monarch acts the Monk,
Or Cobler like, the Parson will be drunk,
Worth makes the Man, and want of it the Fellow;
The rest, is all but Leather or Prunella.

Stuck o'er with *Titles*, and hung round with Strings,
That thou may'st be, by Kings, or Whores of Kings.
Thy boasted Blood, a thousand years or so,
May from Lucretia to Lucretia flow;
But by your Father's worth if yours you rate,
Count me those only who were good and great. 200
Go! if your ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' Scoundrels ever since the Flood,

Go!

Go! and pretend your Family is young ;
 Not own your Fathers have been fools so long.
 What can ennoble Sots, or Slaves, or Cowards ? 205
 Alas! not all the Blood of all the Howards.

Look next on *Greatness*, say where Greatness lies ?
 " Where, but among the Heroes, and the Wise :"
 Heroes are much the same, the point's agreed,
 From Macedonia's Madman to the Suede ; 210
 The whole strange purpose of their lives, to find
 Or make, an Enemy of all Mankind :
 Not one looks backward, onward still he goes,
 Yet ne'er looks forward, further than his nose.
 No less alike the Politick and wife, 215
 All fly slow things, with circumspective eyes ;
 Men in their loose, unguarded Hours they take,
 Not that themselves are wise, but others weak.
 But grant that those can *conquer*, these can *cheat*,
 'Tis phrase absurd to call a Villain *great*. 220
 Who wickedly is wise, or madly brave,
 Is but *the more* a fool, *the more* a knave.
 Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
 Or failing, smiles in exile or in chains,

Like

Like good Aurelius let him reign or bleed

225

Like Socrates, that Man is great indeed.

What's *Fame*? that fancy'd Life in others breath!

A thing beyond us ev'n before our death.

Just what you *hear* you have, and what's unknown

The same (my Lord) it Tully's or your own.

230

All that we feel of it begins and ends

In the small circle of our foes or friends;

To all beside, as much an empty Shade

An Eugene living, as a Cæsar dead,

Alike, or when or where they shone or shine,

235

Or on the Rubicon, or on the Rhine.

A Wit's a *Feather*, and a Chief a *Rod*;

An honest man's the noblest work of God:

Fame but from death a Villain's name can save,

As Justice tears his body from the grave;

240

When what t' Oblivion better were resign'd,

Is hung on high, to poison half mankind.

All Fame is foreign, but of true Desert,

Plays round the head, but comes not to the heart.

One self-approving Hour whole years out-weighs

245

Of stupid starers, and of loud huzza's;

And

225 And more true joy Marcellus exil'd feels
Than Cæsar with a Senate at his heels.

In *Parts* superior what advantage lies !
Tell (for *You* can) what is it to be wise ? 250

230 'Tis but to know, how little can be known,
To see all others faults, and feel our own ;
Condemn'd in bus'ness, or in arts to drudge
Without a Second, or without a Judge :

Truths would you teach, or save a sinking Land ? 255

235 All fear, none aid you, and few understand.

Painful Preheminence ! yourself to view
Above Life's Weakness, and its Comforts too.

Bring then these Blessings to a strict account,
240 Make fair deductions, see to what they mount ? 260

How much of other each is sure to cost ?

How each for other oft is wholly lost ?

How inconsistent greater Goods with these ?

How sometimes Life is risqu'd, and always Eate ?

245 Think, and if still the *Things* they envy call, 265

Say, would'st thou be the *Man* to whom they fall ?

To fight for Ribbands if thou art so silly,
 Mark how they grace Lord Umbra, or Sir Billy.
 Is yellow Dirt the passion of thy life ?

Look but on Gripus, or on Gripus' wife.

270

If Parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd,
 The wisest, brightest, meanest of Mankind :

Or ravish'd with the whistling of a Name,
 See Cromwell, damn'd to everlasting Fame !

If all united, thy ambition call,

275

From ancient Story learn to scorn them all.

There, in the rich, the honour'd, fam'd, and great,
 See the false Scale of Happiness compleat !

In hearts of Kings or arms of Queens who lay,

(How happy!) those to ruin, these betray,

280

Mark by what wretched steps their Glory grows,

From dirt and sea-weed as proud Venice rose ;

In each, how Guilt and Greatness equal ran,

And all that rais'd the Hero sunk the Man.

Now Europe's Lawrels on their brows behold,

285

But stain'd with Blood, or ill exchange'd for Gold :

'Then see them broke with Toils, or lost in Ease,

Or infamous for plunder'd Provinces.

Oh

Oh Wealth ill-fated ! which no Act of fame
E'er taught to shine, or sanctify'd from shame ! 290

What greater bliss attends their close of life ?

Some greedy Minion, or imperious Wife,
The trophy'd Arches, story'd Halls invade,
And haunt their slumbers in the pompous Shade.

Alas ! not dazled with their Noontide ray, 295

Compute the Morn and Evening to the Day :

The whole amount of that enormous Fame

A Tale ! that blends their Glory with their Shame !

Know then this Truth (enough for man to know)

V I R T U E alone is Happiness below : 300

The only point where human bliss stands still,

And tastes the good without the fall to ill ;

Where only, Merit constant pay receives,

Is blest'd in what it takes, and what it gives :

The joy unequal'd, if its end it gain, 305

And if it lose, attended with no pain :

Without satiety, tho' e'er so blest'd,

And but more relish'd as the more distress'd :

The broadest mirth unfeeling Folly wears,

Less pleasing far than Virtue's very Tears. 310

Good, from each object, from each place acquir'd,
 For ever exercis'd, yet never tir'd;
 Never elated, while one man's oppress'd,
 Never dejected, while another's blest'd;
 And where no wants, no wishes can remain, 315
 Since but to wish more Virtue, is to gain.

See! the sole Bliss Heav'n could on *all* bestow,
 Which who but feels, can taste, but thinks, can know:
 Yet poor with Fortune, and with Learning blind,
 The Bad must miss, the Good untaught will find, 320
 Slave to no Sect, who takes no private road,
 But looks thro' *Nature* up to *Nature's* GOD,
 Pursues that *Chain* which links th' immense Design,
 Joins Heav'n, and Earth, and mortal, and divine;
 Sees, that no Being any Bliss can know 325
 But touches some above, and some below;
 Learns, from this Union of the rising *Whole*,
 The first, last Purpose of the human Soul;
 And knows, where Faith, Law, Morals all began,
 And end, in LOVE of GOD, and LOVE of MAN. 330

For him alone, *Hope* leads from goal to goal,
 And opens still, and opens on his soul,

Till lengthen'd on to *Faith*, and unconfin'd,

It pours the bliss that fills up all the mind.

He sees, why Nature plants in Man alone

335

Hope of known bliss, and Faith in bliss unknown?

(Nature, whose dictates to no other Kind

Are giv'n in vain, but what they seek they find)

Wise is the Present; she connects in this

His greatest *Virtue* with his greatest *Bliss*,

340

At once his own bright Prospect to be blest,

And strongest Motive to assist the rest.

Self-Love thus push'd to Social, to Divine,

Gives thee to make thy Neighbour's blessing thine:

Is this too little for the boundless heart;

345

Extend it, let thy Enemies have part:

Grasp the whole Worlds, of Reason, Life, and Sense,

In one close System of Benevolence.

Happier, as kinder! in whate'er degree,

And height of *Bliss* but height of CHARITY:

350

GOD loves from Whole to Parts; but human Soul

Must rise from Individual to the Whole.

Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,

As the small pebble stirs the peaceful Lake,

The

The Centre mov'd, a Circle strait succeeds, 355
 Another still, and still another spreads;
 Friend, Parent, Neighbour, first it will embrace,
 His Country next, and next all Human-race,
 Wide, and more wide, th' O'erflowings of the mind
 Take ev'ry Creature in, of ev'ry kind; 360
 Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
 And Heav'n beholds its Image in his Breast.

Come then, my Friend! my Genius come along,
 Oh Master of the Poet, and the Song!
 And while the Muse now stoops, or now ascends, 365
 To Man's low Passions, or their glorious Ends,
 Teach me like thee, in various Nature wise,
 To fall with Dignity, with Temper rise;
 Form'd by thy Converse, happily to steer
 From grave to gay, from lively to severe, 370
 Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,
 Intent to reason, or polite to please.
 O! while along the stream of Time, thy Name
 Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,
 Say, shall my little Bark attendant sail, 375
 Pursue the Triumph, and partake the Gale?

And

And shall this Verse to future age pretend
 Thou wert my Guide, Philosopher, and Friend?
 That urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful Art
 From Sounds to Things, from Fancy to the Heart; 380
 For Wit's false Mirror held up Nature's Light;
 Shew'd erring Pride *Whatever Is, is Right*;
 That *Reason, Passion*, answer one great Aim;
 That true *Self-love* and *Social* are the same;
 That *Virtue* only makes our *Bliss below*; 385
 And all our *Knowledge* is, *Ourselves to know*.

F I N I S.



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